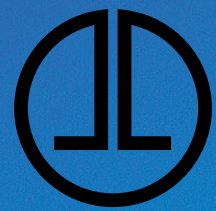


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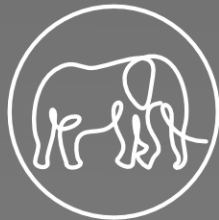
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WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

By Dave Charles

“**SOUTH AFRICA** is once again experiencing a massive emigration of people who no longer feel happy here. South Africa is not a happy country according to the 2022 World Happiness Report that declares that Finland is the happiest country in the world for the fifth year in a row. It's followed by Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, and the Netherlands in the annual survey released on Friday, March 18, 2022, that ranks countries by how happy their citizens perceive themselves to be.

European countries, including Norway, Sweden, and Luxembourg dominate the rest of the top 10. In fact, the only countries outside of Europe to make the top 10 in 2022 are Israel and New Zealand, which ranked ninth and tenth respectively.

These are officially the top 20 happiest countries in the world this year.

- 1. Finland
- 2. Denmark
- 3. Iceland
- 4. Switzerland
- 5. Netherlands
- 6. Luxembourg
- 7. Sweden
- 8. Norway
- 9. Israel
- 10. New Zealand
- 11. Austria
- 12. Australia
- 13. Ireland
- 14. Germany
- 15. Canada
- 16. United States
- 17. United Kingdom
- 18. Czechia
- 19. Belgium
- 20. France.

Obviously, Russia and the Ukraine don't feature, but neither do any African countries. South Africa is so far down on the scale of ratings that it's off the charts. But there is an enclave on the North coast of South Africa that the World Happiness Report has obviously overlooked. It's a place of endless summertime... where the living is easy...fish are jumping... and the cotton is high... (Okay, it's an old song , but you get the picture) The thing is, there is so much to enjoy here, so much to be happy about and people are streaming to Ballito in record numbers. For the past eighteen years Life & Style has been proudly flying the Brand Ballito flag because we love it here and we know that you will too.

Happiness is an elusive state. More than simply positive mood, happiness is a state of well-being that encompasses living a good life, one with a sense of meaning and deep contentment.

Happiness is good for you. A growing body of research suggests that happiness can improve your physical health; feelings of positivity and fulfilment seem to benefit cardiovascular health, the immune system, inflammation levels, and blood pressure too. Happiness has even been linked to a longer lifespan. Attaining happiness is a global pursuit. Researchers find that people from every corner of the world rate happiness more important than other desirable personal outcomes, such as obtaining wealth, acquiring material goods, and even getting into heaven.

Apparently attaining happiness is not the result of bouncing from one joy to the next but according to research it typically involves times of considerable discomfort. Genetic makeup, life circumstances, achievements, marital status, social relationships, and even your neighbours can influence your level of happiness.

The good news is that happiness can be increased by a positive mental attitude. Tuning in to Radio Life & Style on 88FM locally or via our Radio Life & Style app digitally from anywhere, subscribing to The Weekender online or reading this magazine will take you there.

Regularly indulging in small pleasures, getting absorbed in challenging activities, setting and meeting goals, maintaining close social ties, and finding purpose beyond oneself, all increase life satisfaction. It isn't happiness per se that promotes well-being, it's the actual pursuit that's key.

Welcome to our world. Welcome to another edition of Life & Style from Ballito with love!

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KAROO

By Dave Charles

“My wife, Sue, and I have recently returned from a road trip across three provinces into the heart of the Karoo. It’s the kind of trip that I would encourage you to consider. I had no great desire to drive almost two thousand kilometres to nowhere and back, but we have journalist friends, Chris Marais and Julianne du Toit, who have made the Karoo their home for the past two decades, and they put together an itinerary that sounded really good.

Essentially it entailed quite a lot of whisky and coffee sipping on stoeps of old farm-houses. Now, while that’s something that I could do all day, it wouldn’t appeal much to Sue, so they also included a fair deal of spiritual wandering through the world of Zen meditation at Poplar Grove about an hour south of Colesberg. That would be followed by a deep dive into the eery fantasy world of Helen Martins at the Owl House in Nieu-Bethesda in the valley of the desolate Sneeuberge mountains.â

It was also an opportunity to properly road test the Toyota Corolla Hatch that we have on extended loan from Toyota Ballito. At the current price of petrol, there’s no way I was going to take the Jeep anywhere near this trip!

This was a decision that I thought I might have to revisit when I saw the amount of luggage that Sue had prepared for the trip. I could honestly not believe that so many cases and bags and boxes and extra warm blankets could ever be fitted into this little hatch, but, with the rear seats folded down, everything disappeared into the vehicle like Dr Who’s Tardis!

The first leg of the journey took us to Clarens in the Eastern Free State where we spent the night at a comfortable BnB before heading off again across the ever-widening landscape towards our rendezvous with our friends on a dirt road intersection off the N9 just past Colesberg.

At the end of this track that wound seemingly endlessly through featureless pale-yellow grassland, we arrived at a curious collection of ancient farm buildings adjacent to an equally ancient grove of Poplar trees. Poplar Grove Farm is home to a renowned Zen master Antony Osler and his wife, Margie. Antony has been a student of Buddhism since the early 1970’s. He was ordained as a Zen monk by the late Sasaki Roshi and studied under two late Korean Zen Masters, Seung Sahn and Su Bong. He was also formerly an advocate of the High Court, an arbitrator and acting judge, and in 2016 received the Chancellor’s Medal from the University of the Free State for exceptional service to South Africa. Margie was ordained by Zen Master Dae Gak in 2013 as Tae Ja Do, Osho and she now teaches alongside her husband.

Now, I admit that I was rather intimidated by the biographical description of our hosts, but what we met was a delightful pair of twenty-first century hippies who were completely charming and welcoming.

There were also the makings of quite a cool country band in the mix here. Antony plays the double bass; Chris was the former front man of the Silver Creek Mountain Band and the two of us had performed professionally in a close harmony outfit in the eighties. I





Dis al

Dis die blond,
dis die blou:
dis die veld,
dis die lug;
en 'n voël draai bowe in eensame vlug –
dis al

Dis n balling gekom
oor die oseaan,
dis n graf in die gras,
dis n vallende traan –
dis al

Three days in Nieu-Bethesda were enough to convince me that I would go as mad as Helen Martins if we stayed here much longer. The place is full of ghosts, and I don't think they want to be disturbed.



had brought a guitar along for the ride and all we needed was a splash or two from a bottle of Chivas Regal to bring it all together. Then, as the sun set like a blazing Buddhist robe over the distant hills, it was game on! Three days later we left Poplar Grove with a lifetime's worth of indelible memories and headed deeper into the heart of the Karoo. Our destination was the village of Nieu-Bethesda, home of the Owl House. Strange to think that what was once shunned as an abode of madness and sorcery, should today be preserved as a national treasure and the single biggest attractor of tourism and revenue in the district.

It's a strange place – no tarred roads, no auto banks, one small spaza-type store and one church. With a permanent population of around 100 white people with a further 1600 coloured folk in the informal settlement in the dust beyond the “City Limits”, it has the feeling of a rather shabby film set. Yet despite this, or maybe because of the air of desolation, property prices are sky high, and sales seem brisk. I have an idea that city folk are seduced by the idea of a simple country lifestyle to get away from the hard edge of twenty-first century living, and they are largely behind the mini property price boom. In time, it may become as commercialised as Clarens and lose most of its allure. Only time will tell.

Three days in Nieu-Bethesda were enough to convince me that I would go as mad as Helen Martins if we stayed here much longer. The place is full of ghosts, and I don't think they want to be disturbed. The temperature had plummeted to near freezing and there had been some unseasonal rain that turned the Karoo dust to a fine paste that made the ground treacherous underfoot. It was time to go.

We bought a pair of concrete owls with huge green bottle-bottom glass eyes from traders outside the Owl House as a memento of our time here and hit the road. An hour later, we said our goodbyes to Chris and Julie who took a short left towards their Cradock home base and, with a seven-hour drive ahead of us to our overnight stop in Clarens, we turned up a gripping Audio Book selected for the journey and headed for home.

The Toyota Corolla Hatch proved to be an inspired choice for this trip. It was comfortable and easy to drive with plenty of acceleration to overtake the endless stream of heavy trucks that plague our national roads these days. It used very little fuel considering the distance we covered, and I have nothing but praise for it.

Several weeks later, I am still processing the experience. It's as if I have been partially possessed by a restless spirit that aches to return to the vast emptiness from where we have come. Sue's evocative photo and video journals have captured some of the magic, and somehow, this amplifies the feeling. There is a poem by Jan F Cilliers that resonates with what the Karoo has become to me

Dis al

Dis die blond,
dis die blou:
dis die veld,
dis die lug;
en 'n voël draai bowe in eensame vlug –
dis al

Dis n balling gekom
oor die oseaan,
dis n graf in die gras,
dis n vallende traan –
dis al



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5 WAYS TO RESURRECT YOUR NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTIONS

By Shannon Devy

“**We’re** halfway through the year (can you believe it!) and if you’re anything like us, perhaps those enthusiastic New Year’s resolutions have fallen a little by the wayside already. Never fear – it’s not too late to raise your goals from the dead!

HERE ARE FIVE WAYS TO GET REFOCUSED.

Write them down. By hand. In detail. Right now. Studies show that the simple act of writing down your goals increases your chance of achieving them by up to 42%.

Writing down your goals helps you:

- Clarify what you want to do and why
- Focus on the specifics
- Overcome resistance
- Track your progress

Remember to make sure you develop your goals into SMART goals.

They should be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- And Time-bound.

Instead of “I want to start running”, write down “I will be able to run 5km without stopping by December 1”.



Make a plan. Now that you know exactly what you want to achieve, work backwards and identify exactly what you’ll need to do every day to get you there.

This needs to be a specific schedule of manageable actions that, if carried out consistently, will take you to your objective. Be realistic. Take into account your daily schedule and commitments, your energy levels, and your current abilities. Remember, you’re trying to build something, so you need to take it step by step.

Start small. Remember, you eat an elephant one bite at a time. If the prospect of tackling all your goals at once overwhelms you, find one small thing you can do today that will move you closer to where you want to be, and do it. Then do it again tomorrow.

Remove obstacles. Think carefully about what’s getting in your way. Identify your blockers and make moves to eliminate them. If you find yourself loath to get up and exercise in the morning, consider sleeping in your workout gear so you’re ready to go when you wake up.

If you are having trouble thinking of a healthy meal every evening, set aside a few hours on a Sunday to meal prep for the week. Make things as easy for yourself as possible, and you’ll be surprised how quickly new habits develop.

Track your progress. Write down every little win. Seeing how you’re succeeding will fuel more success. Make careful notes of your progress, no matter how small, and watch it snowball.

Good luck! We believe in you!





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HOUSE OF ROCK

Frontier Life

Words and Photos by Chris Marais and Julienne du Toit.

In the Upper Karoo region of the Northern Cape, early settlers built igloos out of shale, cooked their sheep ribs on dolerite slabs and had their epitaphs engraved on sandstone.

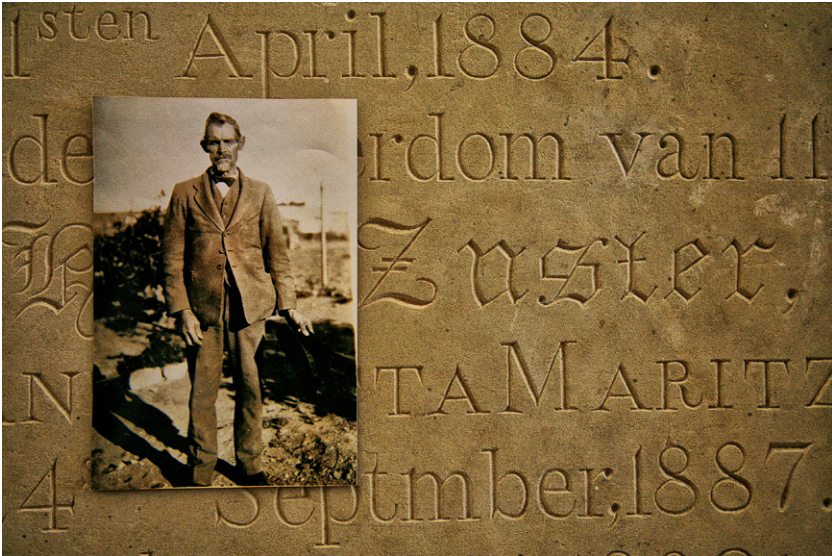
On a spring day in 2008, my wife and partner Julienne and I are nosing about the Williston Museum in the faraway Northern Cape. Country museums, with their musty dioramas, family knick-knacks, innovative pre-electric kitchenware and rows of shackled wagons, are the best. What catches our eye here is the stonework on display: a set of small-scale corbelled houses and an elegantly etched (never mind the odd spelling mistake) gravestone. There's a portrait of its creator, a sombre man in a tight suit, his huge hands dangling as if he's waiting to throttle the photographer for taking too long with the shot.

Meet Cornelius de Waal, the Tombstone Artist of the Karoo. The curator at the time, Elna Marais, bustles over. *“Sometimes he'd be carving a gravestone for six months,” she says. “Then a corner would chip off, and he'd have to start all over again.”*

A Day Out with Elsa. We discover that a Williston resident, one Elsa van Schalkwyk, can show us more of these priceless pieces of Karoo folk art. So we find a bed for the night and book Elsa for a day. Early the next morning, as we cross the Sak River into the rising sun, our guide says, “Now we are in the Agterveld.” She's talking about the old No Man's Land that was once just beyond the control of whoever was running things down in the Cape, be they Brit or Dutchman. Turning onto the Vanwyksvlei Road, we're suddenly in a world of fluffy white, pink and beige kapokbossies (wild rosemary), and then we arrive at an abandoned home on Brownslaagte Farm. It's a corbelled house with a store room and a garage. The doors are faded blue and there are shale struts sticking out from the domed roof. We cautiously push open the front door and walk in.

The Trekboek Hordes. Elsa adds some back-story: “In the early 1800s, when the trekboere finally settled in these parts, everything was made out of wild animal hides: bedding, clothing, shoes, hats, whips and wagon thongs.” Most of those items were probably fashioned from springbok skin, because back then these dainty and delicious little antelope occasionally gathered in their millions and filled the horizon (no mean feat in the Big Sky landscape of the Upper Karoo) in their passing. The hunters would have a field day. There would be biltong for months.

The trekbok migrations carried on for most of the century. In 1896, De Britstownner carried a report on how nearby Vosburg thrived on the springbok trade, so much so that a visitor reportedly called it a Springbuck Town, “with one of the three shops in the village having bought as many as 16 600 springbok skins in a few months and selling as many as 12 000 cartridges every week.”



- The legendary Tombstone Writer of the Hard Man's Karoo, Cornelius de Waal.



- The road to Stuurmansfontein: gates and ground squirrels.



- Stuurmansfontein Farm offers a corbelled self-cater that comes complete with overhead celestial highway.



- The corbel and cart setup on Brownslaagte Farm.

So, of course, Jules and I have to see for ourselves. At the first gate to Stuurmansfontein, we find a ground squirrel colony preparing for the harsh Karoo winter. There are lots of strands of sheep wool caught on the wire fence, but only above a certain height. The squirrels have been hard at work, lining their underground nests with snuggly little Dorper duvets.

The Classic Corbelled Farmstead. A Karoo corbelled house was made with rows of flat stones, each layer placed a little more inwards from ceiling height, until a dome-shaped building was achieved. The peak was then topped off by a flat stone, which could be removed to release smoke from the hearth. Where available, clay mud was used between the stones and once complete, the corbelled house was cool in summer and could easily be kept warm in winter.

Inside the house, the builder installed a number of ‘keep-spaces’ for storage and there would be a couple of beams and fixed animal horns for hanging clothes and drying meat. The floor-base was a mix of cow dung and water, then coated with oxblood and fat and often polished into a smooth, gleaming state – what they called a misvloer. These days, travellers want authenticity, and it doesn’t get more real than a couple of nights spent at Stuurmansfontein, the gold standard of corbelled house accommodation not far from Carnarvon.

So, of course, Jules and I have to see for ourselves. At the first gate to Stuurmansfontein, we find a ground squirrel colony preparing for the harsh Karoo winter. There are lots of strands of sheep wool caught on the wire fence, but only above a certain height. The squirrels have been hard at work, lining their underground nests with snuggly little Dorper duvets. Along the way, on tracks outlined with pale amber Bushman grass, a looming windpump creaks its welcome. Down a valley, up a slope and suddenly we’re at the ancient corbelled house that is Stuurmansfontein.

Jules gets into the old kitchen with its two-plate stove, candles and carry-water pots and whips up a little something delicious involving pasta, mushrooms, broccoli and pesto. I take two straight-backed chairs and place them carefully out on the stoep at the front door.

You could not ask for a better, more romantic dinner spot. Our chairs become front row seats to the best light show on Earth. The Original Karoo Planetarium. We eat in absolute silence, occasionally looking up in awe at the Celestial Highway above us.

The Bywoner Berghs. When it gets chilly outside, we finally scamper in and discover more of the magic that is Stuurmansfontein. We light up all the candles we can find and dot them about the place. In the rich light, it’s possible to relive the frontier days when bywoner (tenant farmer) Fanie Bergh and his family occupied this fold in the hills. Oom Fanie and his folk wanted for nothing. They planted fruit trees: grapes, quinces, apples, oranges, figs and pomegranates, using the attic as a store room. A windpump supplied them with plenty of fresh water. And they had roses growing all over the place, those Heritage-type roses with the very strong fragrance.

Tannie Sannie Bergh was well known in the district for her great coffee, and her secret lay in the dried figs she crushed in with the beans. When the family needed a chop or two, Oom Fanie would go out and shoot a sheep, they’d butcher it and store the cuts in the coolest place they could find: under the marital bed. And if it dripped a little blood, well, that was OK. The floors were made of blood and dung anyhow. When the Berghs planted wheat, they would separate the grain from the chaff on the threshing floor about 200 metres down the hill, storing the grain in another special little purpose-built corbelled house. They hardly ever needed to go shopping in town.



- A smattering of springbok compared to the vast herds of *trekbokke* that once passed through the Karoo.

Autumn 2021. More than a decade later, we return to Stuurmansfontein, and it's like greeting an old friend. There's a new swimming pool outside, a stone dam that catches excess water from the windpump just over the ironstone ridges behind the house.

Owners Piet and Charmaine Botha live on the nearby Bethlehem Farm, in an elegant and well-tended homestead even in this brown time of drought. Charmaine tells us that more than a century ago, this elegant corbelled home was the centre of social life in the area. "When there was a party, neighbours would arrive in their Cape Carts and oxwagons. Others would just walk over the rocky hills. The furniture would be moved outside. They would dance in the big corbelled building, and the light and dust from the misvloere would fly out the windows."

Jules and I would have been the ones occupying a couch outside, cuddled up and gazing at the Milky Way, which is what you tend to do after-dark in this wondrous place.

A Well-loved Escape. The Stuurmansfontein visitors' book tells you just how popular this corbelled hideaway is. Another gesture of fondness is the arranged pile of broken glass and porcelain, placed there by guests who went picking through the Bergh Family midden at the back. We add our bits to the collection and thank the stars above that the world still has such interesting hideaways for long-distance travelers.

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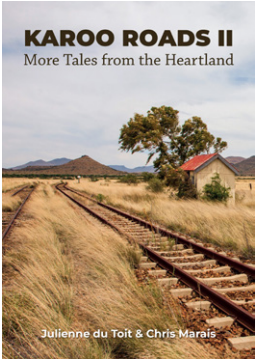
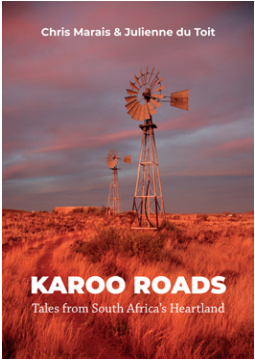
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- The main bedroom at Stuurmansfontein, with its mesmerising ceiling.



- Very old glass bottles used back in the *bywoner* days.



MORE FROM THE AUTHOR.

For an insider's view on life in the Karoo, get the *Three-Book Special of Karoo Roads I, Karoo Roads II and Moving to the Platteland – Life in Small Town South Africa* by Julianne du Toit and Chris Marais for only R720, including courier costs in South Africa. For more details, contact Julie at: julie@karoospace.co.za

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KOSI BAY AND THE LAKES

By Steve Honeysett

“One of my favourite places to visit is the coastal dune forests and lake systems of Northern KZN. I recently spent a weekend at the Kosi Mouth area and did a day visit down to the estuary mouth and fish traps. This has got to be on your “to do” list!

The area is a stone's throw away from the Southern Mozambique border and is part of the four-lake system that makes Kosi Bay Lakes such an attraction. With the work that has been done by Ezemvelo on the access road down to the mouth, you no longer need a 4x4 and can easily get down with a 4x2 bakkie or SUV. The sand road has been replaced by a concrete road down as far as the bridge which is close to the car park.

There is also a new concrete road up to the view site on top of the hill which gives you an unlimited view of the four lakes and their surrounds. There are a number of nice places to stay in the area, all close to the lakes and within easy distance to other attractions like Tembe Elephant Park or the Turtle Viewing sites of Banga Nek. You can also take a day trip to Mozambique as Ponto de Ouro is just over the border.

We stayed at the Utshwayelo Camp which is just outside the Kosi Mouth Gate and a few kilometres off the main road from the border, which was great for us as we were going to spend the week down in Ponto to do some surfing.

Utshwayelo is a nice bush resort with a variety of different accommodation options including basic camping, log cabins or luxury glamping tents all spread out nicely giving you the bush feel. Each site has a reed fence for privacy and there is a swimming pool, bar and large communal kitchen. The staff members are friendly and it's a great place to meet people.

The estuary mouth is good for fishing and diving or just for taking a stroll along the beach in either direction to admire the crystal clean ocean or the highest natural sand dunes in KZN. The beaches are flat, and one can ride a fat bike for miles along this stretch. If you are keen for an adventure, then a 12km ride down to Banga Nek is a great experience with some beautiful scenery to admire. If you are there in turtle season, you might experience the great dash for the ocean when the eggs hatch.

There are boat trips to view the centuries old fishing methods by local fishermen with their fish traps made of reeds or their amazing handmade reed boats that they net from. You could also go on a guided kayak paddling excursion.

The town of Manguzi is ten minutes down the road if you need supplies with a number of the large supermarkets, petrol stations, a hospital and loads of small shops to explore on a walk around town for a morning or afternoon. One needs to spend a good few days there to explore this area and it is well worth putting it on your next holiday list as it is a comfortable 4 hour drive from Ballito and there are some nice stops along the way for breakfast or lunch.

Seaweed Steve presents the Daily Surf & Weather Report on 88FM Ballito



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5 FUNCTIONAL FOODS FOR GREAT ENERGY LEVELS

By Kim Wilson



“The latest health crisis involves energy, and it’s not related to Eskom (for once). A lot of us are feeling overworked, overstressed, overfatigued and overwhelmed from dealing with all that we have had to handle over the past couple of years. As a result, there’s a great need for enhanced energy levels.

“Energy” may technically mean “the ability to do work”, however in the context of your health it’s a broader term. Energy encompasses not only physical stamina but mental stamina, too. When we seek out energy-enhancing foods, we are seeking out foods that also improve our mental clarity, mood, and motivation level.

ENERGISING FUNCTIONAL FOODS

It goes without saying that simply eating a healthful diet, including sufficient calories, is important to sustain your energy levels. However, beyond this there are in fact a few ingredients that offer functional nutrients designed specifically to enhance energy and improve overall wellbeing.

Ashwagandha

As an adaptogen, ashwagandha supports the body to adapt to stress by regulating the cortisol response. Ashwagandha may not directly boost energy levels, but rather it prevents the negative effects of a poor stress response (which in itself drains energy levels). In relation to sports performance, Ashwagandha has been shown to increase the maximum oxygen consumption (VO2 max) in healthy adults and athletes. Furthermore, it may help increase muscle strength.

Ginseng

As with Ashwagandha, Ginseng is also known as an adaptogen. Ginseng is an herbal supplement that has a long history of use in Chinese medicine. It has been shown to increase energy levels and fight feelings of fatigue. It may also enhance sports performance by increasing energy production and decreasing oxidative stress in cells.

Medicinal Mushrooms

Medicinal mushrooms have been used in Eastern medicine for centuries. The list of benefits of medicinal mushrooms as a group is lengthy, but individually each mushroom is unique and provides its own set of distinct health benefits. To combat stress and its related fatigue, Reishi is one of the most popular medicinal mushrooms. It has unique calming properties which have been associated with decreased anxiety and depression, and better sleep. Reishi can also sharpen focus, making it great for concentration and motivation. For greater mental clarity, your best choice is Lion’s Mane. This



medicinal mushroom supports the production of compounds that are absolutely crucial to brain health. Lion's Mane has been shown to improve cognitive function, increase concentration, and decrease irritability and anxiety. Finally, for a targeted sports performance and energy boost, we have Cordyceps. Cordyceps is the medicinal mushroom that helps the body utilise oxygen more efficiently and improves blood flow. It has been shown to improve exercise and sports performance, as well as speed up muscle recovery.

Turmeric

Turmeric has been popular for some time now, mostly due to its potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects. Turmeric has also been extensively studied in relation to brain health. The active component, curcumin, has been shown to improve mood, decrease fatigue and lessen symptoms of depression. These benefits in turn all contribute to greater feelings of energy and motivation.

Cannabidiol (CBD)

This one may be surprising as most often CBD is used for relaxation and inducing sleep, however in the right dose it can help increase energy levels and focus. A low dose of CBD can in fact act as a stimulant, rather than a sedative. CBD taken at the right dose, at the right time, can encourage greater focus and mental balance. Further research to clarify this ideal dose is still needed, but this is a promising area to look out for.

Final Thoughts

High-quality diets can enhance your energy levels, as well as every other area of general health and so this is always a good place to start. For stressful times when this healthful diet isn't sufficient, then functional foods such as ashwagandha, ginseng, medicinal mushrooms, turmeric and CBD can provide you with the added boost you need.

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MOVES THAT FUTURE YOU WILL THANK YOU FOR CONTINUED... SQUATS AND LUNGES.

By Leah Acampora

“**Now** that you’ve had sufficient time to master core engagement with the guidance provided in the May/June issue, it’s time to step it up a notch and learn how to perform the squat and deadlift correctly.

You’ll remember that the basis of this article is geared towards exercising for longevity. We began with the how to’s for optimal core engagement, because these will need to be applied to the next two movements (and ideally all movements in daily life).

The squat and deadlift are often confused by beginners – they share similarities but also distinct differences. The most prominent similarity and the overarching movement pattern that they share is the hip hinge.

Without realising it, we perform the hip hinge movements all day, every day. When we go from sitting to standing or vice versa, when we bend over, lift things from a lowered position and even while we’re seated. But there’s a distinct difference between bending from your back and hinging from your hips.

The muscles required to perform an optimal hip hinge movement include the hamstrings, glutes, deep core muscles and several back muscles. These are also the muscles that are the most deconditioned due to being in a seated position for long periods at a time. Given modern lifestyles, it’s no wonder we find these movements challenging and end up with injuries.

There are plenty variations of both the squat and the deadlift, but let’s focus on the initial phase of movement for both and the ways in which they vary:

- First, you need to engage your core (see May/June issue).
- Now maintain a neutral pelvis by thinking about keeping a connection between the lower ribs and hips (again, do not over exaggerate, this should feel natural, not limiting)
- Now shift your bum backwards (still maintaining steps 1-6 of the core engagement). You’ll notice that your back naturally lowers at the hips in a forwards direction as you drive your hips backwards.

This is where things get interesting; to perform a squat ensure that your feet are placed slightly wider than your hips, keep sending your hips backwards and downwards by bending the knees whilst maintaining a diagonal spine. Eventually your hips will be at the same height or lower than your knees depending on your range of movement.

Your core is still engaged and you’re maintaining the connection between your ribs and hips. Your chest is open and you’re actively thinking about squeezing your glute muscles. Your back stays unchanged as you move up and down.



To perform a basic deadlift, align your feet hip width apart. As you send your hips back-wards (performing a hinge), allow your knees to bend while your back lowers until it’s parallel with the floor or as far as your mobility allows (keep your spine tall and strong, DO NOT ROUND your upper back!) all the while maintaining core engagement.

Allow your hamstrings to lengthen as your hips move backwards and “upwards” whilst your back lowers, raising and maintaining the hips higher than the knees. To come up, think about squeezing your glutes so hard that your back (still unchanged) lifts as a result and you return to a standing position.

At this stage you may be wondering what to do with your arms – firstly avoid interlacing your fingers and clutching your palms together. You want to keep an open chest. Think of maintaining length from collar bone to collar bone. When performing a squat (body weight) you can allow your arms to raise up as you go down until they’re parallel with the floor and each other, then allow them to return to your sides as you come up.

For the deadlift (body weight) a great way to start is by placing your palms against your thighs, fingers pointing downwards and allow them to slide towards your knees as your hips hinge backwards, maintaining a flat back posture. Allow them to slide back up as you squeeze your glutes and your back returns to the tall upright position.

Aim to perfect these basics using only your body weight before adding weights or variations.

MAKING A RUNNER, THE PODCAST FOR RUNNERS BY RUNNERS.

a proudly local production. By Leah Acampora,

“**Running** is an age-old sport with long distance marathon running’s roots firmly embedded in Greek history. But it was not until the 1896 Athens Olympics that the first official marathon distance of 26.2 miles / 42.2 km was held.

Fast forward 122 years, and there are 1.1 million marathon participants, 2.1 million half-marathon participants and 1.6 million 10 km participants competing in races held world-wide throughout 2018. And that’s just road running – the International Trail Running Association estimates that there are about 1.77 million trail runners, globally.

Clearly, running has become a very popular pastime which is no longer reserved for the elite few who compete at an Olympic level, but enjoyed by your average citizen too, although make no mistake, Mr. Joe Average is not complacent with his average time.

The beauty of running in the 21st century is innovation and technology have become readily available, from gear to access to professional coaching services. Every runner can be competitive because, unless you’re an elite, competition is limited to your last personal best time. Paradoxically, all this information can also be quite overwhelming, with many runners making common mistakes along the way (which, in turn, makes for good stories).

This brings us neatly to the crux of this article: introducing L&S media’s latest production, the Making a Runner Podcast, hosted by local running duo Nic Acampora (@nic_thebio), a running specialist Biokineticist and coach, and David Fick (@daveyontherun), ASICS Frontrunner and avid competitor.



In Making a Runner, Nic and Davey dive into the world of running headfirst, interviewing professional athletes and coaches, subject matter experts and ordinary runners with extraordinary stories to tell.

In conversation with the guests, the podcast offers Nic’s educated opinion as a health professional in contrast with Davey’s enquiries as a passionate every day runner, asking the questions we’d all like answers to, some controversial, most of them hilarious and all of them insightful.

As you read this there are already 7 episodes available for your listening pleasure, each of them 45 minutes to 1 hour in length. You can listen on the Life & Style app (available as a free download) or your preferred streaming platform, including Apple Podcasts and Spotify.

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HEAVY IS THE HEAD

The REAL Crystal Birch by Dan Charles

“**Extravagant** hats can typically be found perched upon the heads of the following people: someone who is fashionable; someone who is charismatic; someone who is obnoxious; or someone who is a nice lady who wants to look her best for church on Sunday. However, one will most unlikely be found being worn by someone who is dull or devoid of passion. This is because these are the sorts of hats that are able to announce their presence in a room before the people wearing them have even entered it themselves. They are full to the brim with character (quite literally) and require you to meet them at their level or else they will mercilessly eclipse your presence. Neil Gaiman explained this principle best at the end of his book *Anansi Boys*: “Some hats can only be worn if you’re willing to be jaunty, to set them at an angle and to walk beneath them with a spring in your stride as if you’re only a step away from dancing. They demand a lot of you.” Suffice to say, heavy is the head that wears a hat made by the REAL Crystal Birch.

Since registering the Real Crystal Birch brand in 2013, Crystal’s millinery mission has taken her from selling hats out of her stand at the Old Biscuit Mill market in Cape Town to eventually taking full ownership of the esteemed 84-year-old manufacturing company Parisian Milliners (now named The Hat Factory), after acquiring the factory rights from her mentor and former business-partner, Harry Faktor, in 2020. Despite being forced to significantly downscale the factory’s operations and relocate to a premises, due to the hardships that came during the national Covid 19-lockdown, Crystal’s chic and surrealistic vision continues to expand within the walls of The Hat Factory. With Crystal Birch and her team at the helm, the future of modern millinery is certainly going to be, if anything, extravagant.

Having made your start in the fashion industry working as a stylist, have you always felt an affinity towards hats? What drew you towards wanting to work in millinery as opposed to any medium of fashion design?

My fascination with fashion started at a young age. I loved my mom’s shoes and reconstructed clothes in high school. I graduated at Elizabeth Galloway Academy of Fashion and lined up many internships. My first internship was at Elle magazine assisting Jackie Burger, she opened many doors for me. I realized I wanted to become a specialist and always gravitated towards the head – I studied a short course in London and was so eager to learn more and play in the accessory Head space.

What was the best piece of advice or wisdom that you got from Harry Faktor while the two of you were working together?

Harry said: Your money should not be on the shelves, it should be in the bank. And that the best hat, is a sold hat! He always remembered all the suppliers and he deleted every single email, his inbox was empty, he printed out my emails and put it on my desk for me in the mornings. This was very special.







I don't always know what will inspire or lead me to a whack concept – there is no specific recipe. I'm inspired by stories, real life event, materials we have available at the time, we also pay attention to what our clients are keen for or requesting and where the energy goes the energy flows. Other collections are based on best styles, trends and season essentials.



- Crystal Birch

Has taking on the sole responsibility of running The Hat Factory taken away some of the magic of creating or has it helped to develop a richer appreciation for your craft?

Yes, managing such a big team, moving our factory and to put new systems in place has been very challenging. These things do take away from the creativity, HR, Accounts, Admin, Production, cash flow, Bargaining Council, Union etc all are things to attend to and leaves little room for me to play. BUT Im taking that back so that I can get out of the managerial position and back in to the creative space to express myself and be hands on. Im going to host workshops soon.

What goes into your process of developing the fantastical concepts behind some of your signature lines of hats? As someone that has faced harassment from various forms of fowls in my past, the Quack Attack! really spoke to me on a personal level.

I don't always know what will inspire or lead me to a whack concept – there is no specific recipe. I'm inspired by stories, real life event, materials we have available at the time, we also pay attention to what our clients are keen for or requesting and where the energy goes the energy flows. Other collections are based on best styles, trends and season essentials.

I've read that you and other established millinery brands such as Simon & Mary have started working a lot closer together since the pandemic in order to more efficiently fulfil particular orders. Has this new era of running a business eliminated a sense of competition in favour of collaboration amongst local milliners and designers? How else has your craft changed from pre-2020 to now?

The millinery industry is so small – we have to reach out to each other and support one another. Lock down allowed us to reach out and share knowledge and to buy raw materials from them.

What is the future looking like for The Hat Factory and The Real Crystal Birch?

I'm looking forward to a very busy summer, I would like to host workshops soon create special pieces by hand more. The Factory feels like its opening up to experiences too, rather than just production. We hosted a beautiful lunch for Sohoouse with animals gathering at The Waterhole – each hat was made especially for each guest based on their spirit animals in the Serengeti at sunset. This was a dream come true.

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ENDLESS HORIZONS

By Stephanie du Preez

WITH MAGNIFICENT 180 DEGREE PANORAMIC SEA VIEWS, THIS STYLISHLY CONTEMPORARY HOME SITUATED ON THE FANTASTICALLY PICTURESQUE KWAZULU NATAL NORTH COAST, MAKES FULL USE OF THE BALMY COASTAL CLIMATE.

The house is 530 square meters of bold, modern architecture, bringing the great South Africa coastal outdoors in. Because the home was to be situated on a steep site, the architects, Metropole Architects, designed a progressive cantilever form over three cascading levels, representing an uninhibited architectural expression, free from restrictive stylistic design guidelines.

The OLALA INTERIORS journey with the owners of this fabulous home initially started with specifications of the soft furnishing. This very quickly progressed to the detailing and design of the interior architectural and functional elements too.

The OLALA INTERIORS design team effortlessly mastered the complex interior design, specification and refined detailing on this project. “Using good design principles, we created and implemented a clean and contemporary interior”, says Schanè Anderson.

As a testament to good functional design and exceptional craftsmanship, OLALA INTERIORS remains incredibly proud of the beautiful bespoke and custom made pieces, furniture and cabinetry throughout the home.



“From the moment I walked in the door of this home I felt welcome”, says Grant Pitcher, the photographer who truly captured the essence of the home. “Welcome to showcase the magnificent design that made every aspect of this home a majestic viewing space for the Indian Ocean below. The colour palette and design of the interiors within allow the spaces to feel like a home. It was such a treat to capture the location in beautiful light and display vibrant imagery that are testament to good design.”



The textures and palette used throughout the home work hand in hand with all the interior finishes to blend perfectly together.

Interior styling, furniture and finishes are an ‘African Contemporary’ fusion of colour and texture that complements the architectural spaces and synergises with a contemporary beach aesthetic.





With sea views to die for, a soft coastal palette of greys and white was used to maximise the views and the light. To bring comfort and warmth to the cooler colours, plenty of soft furnishings, including luxurious throws and plush fabrics were incorporated into the design.



All the bathroom vanities, cabinetry, solid wood dining table, plasma units and built-in cabinetry were specially designed and manufactured by OLALA INTERIORS. The result is a world-class quality installation.





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“Following the successful introduction of The Studios, the Ballito Lifestyle Centre has expanded on the concept, literally taking it to the next level.

Next Level Ballito is a welcoming collection of meeting spaces with a difference. These are beautifully decorated and appointed spaces of various sizes designed to comfortably accommodate business meetings, workshops, hobby clubs or intimate social gatherings.

Next Level aims to connect the Ballito community by providing an inspiring meeting place. To this end, it is professionally coordinated and managed by a focused, proficient team with one mission: to enable the North Coast community to connect, engage and perform at a different level by providing an unparalleled meeting experience. Bookings for each space can be made hourly or daily at the reservations desk in the Studios and Next Level is perfectly located with regard to catering and convenience, being literally around the corner from the Eat Street precinct at the Lifestyle Centre.

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YORI OKI

You Simply Must Try It - By Dave Charles

“The Ballito region continues to grow at an astonishing rate. While the easy coastal lifestyle is undoubtedly a contributing factor to its enormous popularity, I am tempted to suggest that the Lifestyle Centre with its extraordinary mix of attractions is now possibly an even bigger attractor.

It's extraordinary to think that just a few short years ago the Lifestyle Centre was a strip mall that lost most of its retail tenants to a regional mall development across the road. It took enormous courage and vision to transform the original concept into the constantly evolving and wildly popular upmarket lifestyle destination that it has become. In my opinion, the Rencken brothers and their creative team deserve much more recognition for the role that they have played in the building of Brand Ballito.

The latest attraction at the Lifestyle Centre is a restaurant that adds a unique oriental fusion style offering to the line-up found along Eat Street. Yori Oki Sushi & Grill is an intimate 60-seater Japanese styled restaurant showcasing an eclectic mix of contemporary and traditional design dominated by a large feature wall mural by local artist Jane Digby. The food and drinks are presented in a way that adds to the visual appeal, with each dish prepared and plated to perfection and signature cocktails creating a feast for the senses. It offers traditional as well as signature sushi, claiming to take sushi to the next level, along with an extensive main menu focused on the food of Japan, including Dim Sum, Ramen, Mamezara (small dishes) and Robatayaki (flame-grilled skewers on special Bincho-tan coals). The Yori Oki chefs present an interesting take on the vibrant and distinctive flavours of contemporary Japanese fusion cuisine.

An excellent wine list and extensive range of Japanese liquor and whiskeys completes the culinary and sensory experience, with the beautiful design elements creating the perfect setting. You simply must try it. View the menu and book a table or order online for home delivery or takeaway at

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INSIDE THE ORANJEZICHT CITY FARMER'S MARKET

By Mia McCarthy

“I write this sitting on the airplane to Cape Town from Durban, where I have just attended the wedding of a dear friend of mine. The ceremony was nothing short of lovely - a genuine demonstration of gentle love and commitment. Yet, as the plane drones on from my old home in Durban to my current home in Cape Town, I am struck by a singular thought: I'd rather have a tomato than a diamond.

Had you told my younger self that one day I would fawn over aubergines and tomatoes at a farmer's market the same way that other young people of my generation are fawning over engagement rings and newborn babies, I can't say that I would have been entirely surprised. As my mother very gently put it, she knew I was bound to live an interesting life.

Passionate home cooks tend to be well-informed about the fresh produce that they use, and there is scarcely a better place to become well-informed about your fresh produce than the Oranjezicht City Farmer's Market. Unprompted, one of the market's faithful organisers will wax lyrical about the virtues of that weekend's seasonal harvest on a loudhailer. It's like having a zealous town crier who only has good news to share. If you've ever cared to learn about the myriad kinds of tomatoes you can buy, the market is the place for it. Pearl tomatoes are the size of a blueberry and, when eaten fresh, pop in the mouth with a satisfying splash of sweet acidity. Beefsteak tomatoes come in the most astounding shapes and sizes. They display a delicate, intricate design, like latticework when cut open. San Marzano plum tomatoes are oval-shaped and, like many Italian exports, are best enjoyed served with fresh ciabatta, flaky salt, chopped basil, and a generous glug of olive oil.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the OZCF Market is that they source from small-scale local farmers. Charmingly, many of these farmers have specialised interests, and it shows in the produce that crops up at the market. In winter, you might encounter truly fantastic fruit and veg. A few weeks ago, the buddha hand citrus made its short-lived appearance on the shelves. The fingered citron is shaped, as you might imagine, like an otherworldly hand. It produces no flesh, but the heavenly fragranced skin can be used in a few ways in the kitchen. Grate and dry the peel to make lemon salt, brew it in hot water for a delicious tea, add it to soups and curries for a delightful citrus kick, or simply allow it to fragrance your home.

Now is also the time for romanesco broccoli. This chartreuse wonder is renowned for its fractal form. Amazingly, the number of spirals on the heads of a romanesco is always a Fibonacci number. Only in the abundant aisles of the market are you confronted with such complex maths and the astounding wonder of nature!

But the true star of the fresh produce cornucopia is the Violetta aubergine, which comes into season during our autumn period. You can read how much I love and adore the Violetta aubergine (and how to use it in a melanzane recipe!) on the Life & Style blog.

The OZCF Market

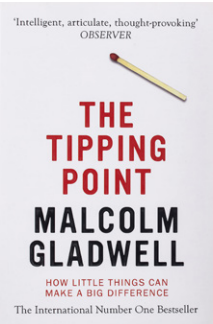
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HEARD & READ

This month’s book and music recommendations.

“If you’re looking for something new to read or something fresh to listen to, we’ve got just the ticket! Here is a collection of some of our favourites this month.



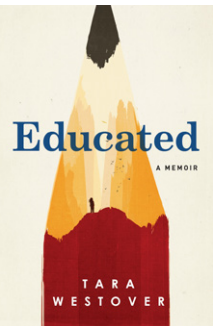
The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell

There is something thrilling about how Malcolm Gladwell sees the world. If you’re not familiar with his work, “The Tipping Point” is an excellent place to start. Why do kids born in December do better at hockey? How did New York lower the crime rate by fixing the busted light bulbs in the subway? Through fascinating case studies, Gladwell investigates how small things lead to big changes.



1984 by George Orwell

Published in 1949, George Orwell’s most famous novel has stood the test of time, and not in a particularly good way. Over 70 years later, the dystopian world he creates has actually come to pass in many ways, making this book more of a work of uncanny prophecy than masterful sci-fi. It’s a bloody good read (or re-read) either way.



Educated by Tara Westover

Tara Westover was 17 the first time she set foot in a classroom. Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, her parents didn’t believe in schools or doctors. “Educated” is traces Westover’s personal quest to educate herself, but it also serves as a poignant memoir of self-invention, fierce family loyalty and grief. A fascinating memoir unlike any other we’ve ever read, we’re sure you’ll love it!



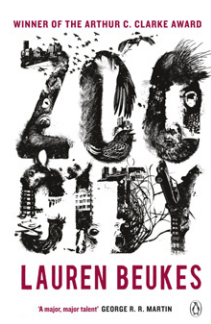
The Paris Apartment by Lucy Foley

If you’re a fan of a good old whodunnit, this new novel from Lucy Foley should be top of your reading list. Jess needs a fresh start, so she goes to visit her mysterious brother in Paris. But when she arrives at his breath-taking Paris apartment, he’s nowhere to be found. The deeper she digs trying to find him, the more danger she finds herself in.



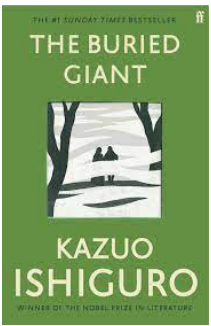
The Power by Naomi Alderman

A gripping read with a fascinating premise: what would happen if teenage girls were suddenly imbued with a strange power, able to cause immense physical pain just using touch. This extraordinary novel by Naomi Alderman, a Sunday Times Young Writer of the Year and Granta Best of British writer, is not only a story of how the world would change if power was literally in the hands of women but also exposes, with breath-taking daring, the world we live in.



Zoo City by Lauren Beukes

South African science fiction? You read that right! This fantastic novel by superstar local author Lauren Beukes follows the story of Zinzi December, a former journalist and drug addict with a special skill for finding lost things. It’s set in an alternative version of Jo’burg where anyone who has committed a crime is magically endowed with an animal familiar, marking them forever as “zoos”. We follow Zinzi as she embarks on a twisting mission to find a lost member of a famous local pop duo. But will she survive the assignment?



The Buried Giant by Kazuo Ishiguro

A spectacular novel from Nobel Prize-winning author Kazuo Ishiguro. “The Buried Giant” follows an elderly Briton couple, Axl and Beatrice, living in a fictional post-Arthurian England in which no-one is able to retain long-term memories. After dimly recalling that they might years earlier have had a son, the couple decide to travel to a neighbouring village to seek him out. Their journey becomes a testament to enduring love.



“Boxer” by The National

If you’ve never heard The National, get ready for some very big feelings. “Boxer” is the fourth studio album from the American indie group, and it is an excellent way into the band’s signature gorgeous lyricism, melancholy arrangements and absolutely heart-stopping emotive power.



“No Such Thing as a Fish” by the QI Elves

No Such Thing as a Fish is an award-winning podcast from the writers of the smash-hit quiz show QI. Every week, they meet to discuss the most interesting facts they’ve learned that week. The result is a joyful, fascinating listen which will keep you entertained for hours.



“Welcome to the World” by Shane Cooper and MABUTA

Local is very lekker with this incredible album by South African Shane Cooper & MABUTA. Fresh, innovative and infinitely interesting, this power collab is showing us a sonic future rooted firmly in our home.



“Hounds of Love” by Kate Bush

Kate Bush’s classic “Running Up That Hill” has surged to the top of the charts across the world this week due to a feature in the latest season of “Stranger Things”. As good an excuse as any to revisit this absolute classic!



“Dance Fever” by Florence and the Machine

The much-anticipated new album from Florence and the Machine is here, and it doesn’t disappoint! Produced over the pandemic, we hear frontwoman Florence Walch in full voice and full drama. Bound to have you dancing through the weekend and beyond!



“Ugly Season” by Perfume Genius

Avant-garde alt-pop provocateurs Perfume Genius are back with a brand-new offering, and it’s just as surprising, lush and catchy as ever. A really interesting listen from top to bottom, Ugly Season sees the band as weird and wonderful as ever.



We’ve Been Going About This All Wrong” by Sharon Van Etten

If you’ve not yet been bowled over by Sharon’s signature sonic style, today is your day! Produced in her home studio in Los Angeles, Sharon Van Etten’s sixth album embraces the complications of the past two years. Once again, the American indie star delivers the soundtrack to our lives!

THE SPIRIT OF THE COMMUTER

EROICA By Stefan Naude’

Photography: Stan Engelbrecht

I don’t consider myself a cyclist at all. Those gleaming “Power Rangers” with their shiny helmets smuggling energy syrup have never made an impression on me. Yet a bicycle has always been a part of my life. Since my father first pushed me down the slight decline in the front garden, I realized that by rotating that circular crank with peddles attached. I could keep this ship moving. So, at a very young age, I realised that I could explore the neighbourhood and beyond. The world was my oyster.

Besides being a source of freedom, it also became my first source of income as I took over my older brother’s Newspaper route at the age of twelve when he went off to boarding school in the Magaliesberg. Vivid memories of my father waking me up at five-thirty in the morning come to mind (I am still not much of a morning person) and helping me fold and secure the papers with rubber bands. When the rains thundered in the sky we would bag them in clear plastic bags. I set off in my raincoat with two bulging bags, one over each shoulder that would unbalance my skinny frame as it swayed from side to side while I was dripping in the rain like a fisherman fighting the storm to make his daily catch. There were many dangers in this ocean of streets. Dodging busses was one of them, cursing husbands yelling at me in their underpants if my aiming skills towards their front doors were not as they would have desired. And then my endless anxiety of chasing dogs that would escape their yards and race after me at top speed.

As I became older and started ‘sidewalk surfing’ it became my only means of transport to different terrains and “spots” that we heard about in other neighbourhoods and Malls on the distant horizons. So with a skateboard strapped to my backpack, I explored the unknown urban jungles of Randburg and its surrounding areas. Along with sneaking out at night, cycling to nightclubs, and chaining my bike to the fence outside while the other boys arrived on their fancy metallic motorized steeds.

Since then, I have always owned or had access to a bicycle and the freedom that goes along with it. But for some reason, the competitive side of the machine never really grabbed my attention because, like my skateboard, it was a symbol of individuality to me. Something that I can do and enjoy by myself. Along with following rules, competing in sports and being a team player was never my forte’.

Forward to my forties, I moved to Cape Town and sold my car (out of necessity). A friend offered me an old racing bike that was standing around their art studio that seemed to have belonged to no one. I immediately jumped at the opportunity and a new phase of cycling in my life was reignited by an old red late eighties Bridgestone racer. For the past five years, we have had many adventures and a few injuries too. It has been my main form of transport and one of the few joys that I have left on this planet. The thrill of zipping through the traffic as I once did on my skateboard, cursing a taxi, or the meditation on long rides to small towns along the coast is priceless to my mental health.

So this year I finally decided to take on a type “conformist” event and enter Eroica. Eroica (L'Eroica) is an annual non-competitive cycling event that has taken place since 1997





in the province of Siena, Italy. Since then the event has spread to multiple continents, including to the Montagu valley in the Western Cape.

The original theme of the event is vintage cycling, with participants using vintage (pre-1987) bikes, accessories, and clothing, and the route often includes unpaved roads. The event is open to anybody, but cyclists participating with a vintage bike are honoured with a certificate certifying their participation. Vintage bikes are defined by characteristics typical of racing bikes used until the 1980s. These include a Steel frame, gear levers mounted on the down tube of the frame, external wires, pedals with toe straps, wheels with at least 32 spokes, and low-profile rims.

(In the South African version only pre-1999 steel road bicycles with traditional pedals and toe clips; downtube shifters; and drop handlebars will be allowed on the route. No mountain bikes or modern carbon/aluminium road bikes allowed)

Even though my street bike, as I am considered an “Urban cyclist” did not tick all the boxes, it was still respected enough to take part in this titanic challenge. The Friday night before the event there was an exhibition and judging of the most classic steeds in the stable. I found this very fascinating as I have always been an admirer of classic cars and their preservation. Some of these classic rides were in mint condition. They seemed to have been meticulously cared for since they were unpacked in the early seventies.

The event is divided into three sections the “Classic”, “Hero” and the “Nova”. The “Classic” event (which included me) takes place on the Saturday and riders are encouraged to spend a day out on their bikes as they wish. Breakfast, lunch, and drinks are all served along the route while enjoying the majestic scenery of the mountainous region. The ride has a casual start between 08:00 - 11:00, with a detailed map marked with routes and viewpoints. Glühwein, beer, and a few cheeky Gins and tonic plus snacks ranging from breakfast wraps to fresh Salmon sandwiches are served at the 3 stops along the way. The gin makes the event even more challenging and getting stuck at these “watering holes” along the way is very tempting. A good thing about the event is that you can make your day as laid back, or as challenging as you would like while choosing to ride any distance from forty to ninety kilometers.



I ended up riding fifty kilometers, or so I thought, until I was later informed that I did seventy kilometers. I blame this misjudgement of distance entirely on the beverages along the way. Frivolity aside, this ride is not a simple walk in the park. Riding a steel-framed racing bike on a mostly dirt road does take its toll on the human frame. My shivering wrists battled the corrugated dirt roads and shook my kidneys and liver loose until they roamed around my rib cage, never to return to their former locations again. I also decided to walk half of a hill that seemed to have no end in sight. A slight incline that unfolds itself like Jacobs ladder into an abyss with no Heaven in sight. But despite these challenges, you are boosted onwards by the sheer beauty of your surroundings, and encouragement from other cyclists on the path.

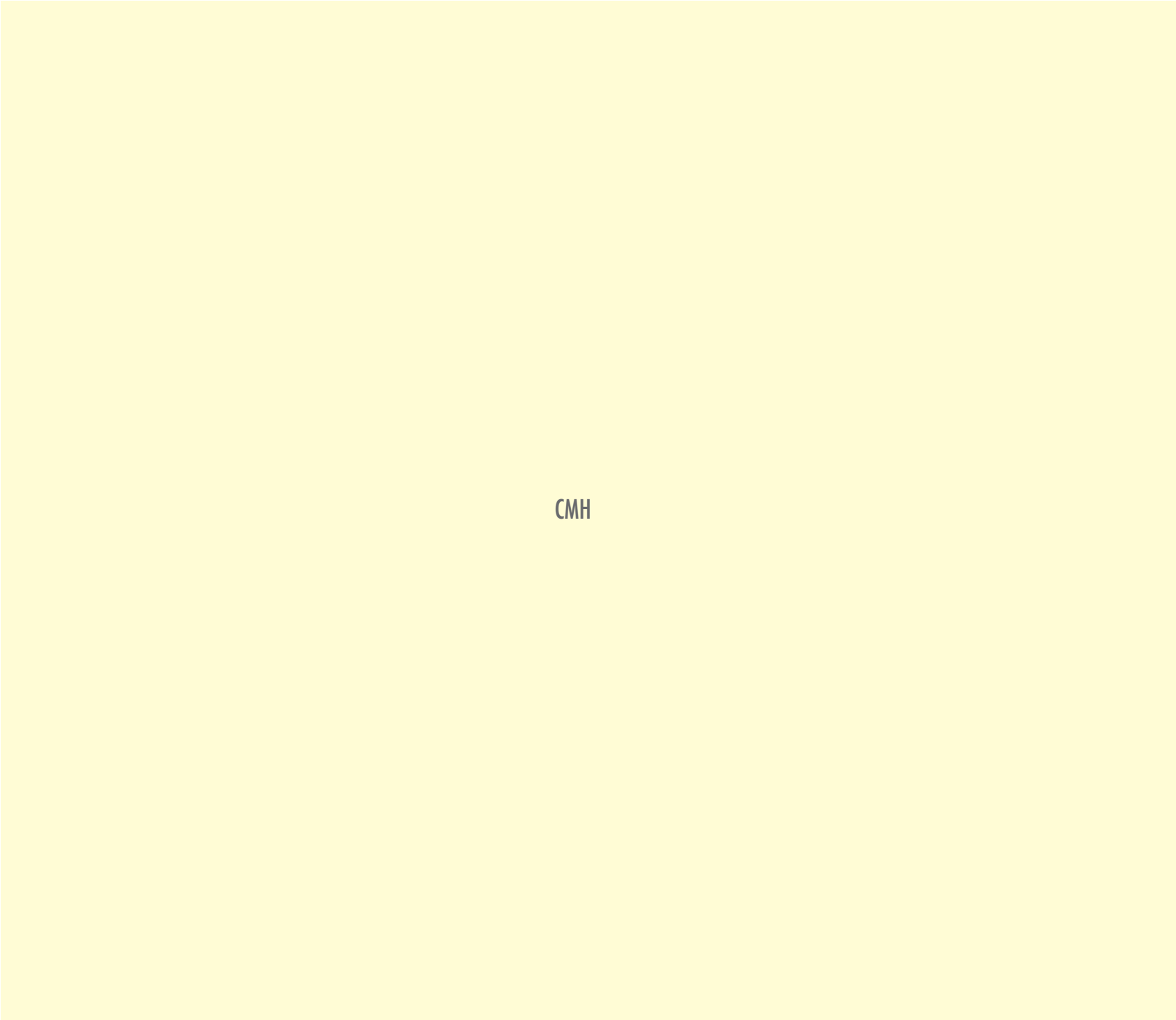
This annual event brings the old legends back on the road and there were multiple South African champions from different age groups (some in their late 70s) taking part in the challenge. Needless to say, most of these elderly gentlemen glided past me with ease on this hellish path of destruction.

On Sunday most of the serious racers arrived for the “Hero” and the “Nova” routes which follow a spectacular 170km path into the Bloutoring region. Only gravel bikes with drop handlebars and no suspension are allowed on the route. After the event, I felt that I had achieved more than I had ever expected of myself. A sense of euphoria and calm had come over me and for the first time in ages I slept like a log. Next year I plan to do this epic journey of adventure, beauty, and personal progress again. If you are up for the challenge, pump up your wheels and tighten your brakes. The road to Eroica is open to everyone.

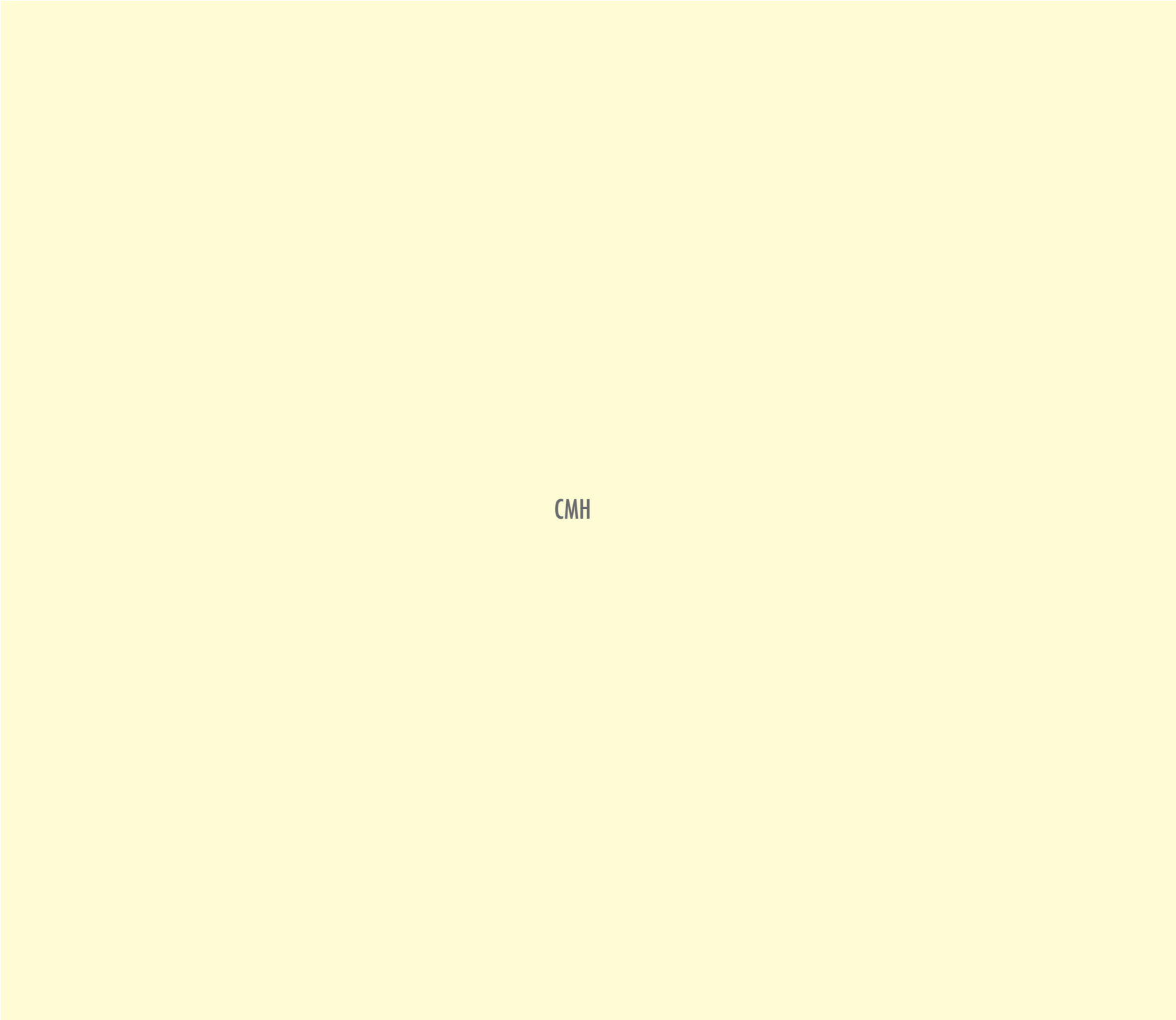
Special thanks to Stan Engelbrecht and Donnet Dumas for organising Eroica South Africa. Next years event will be taking place from the 21-23 April 2023 so mark your calendars for another weekend of bicycle celebrations.

EROICA

[@eroica.cc](http://www.eroica.cc/en/south-africa)



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